

IN THE CLAIMS:

Claims 1-7, 10 and 12-26 are currently pending:

1. (Twice Amended) An apparatus for use in a lifting and towing vehicle, comprising:

a transverse cross bar connected to the end of a boom located rearwardly of the lifting and towing vehicle, the cross bar being positionable below a towable vehicle, and the cross bar having two opposing end portions positionable adjacent to one of a pair of wheels on the towable vehicle;

two slidable receivers each removably connected to the opposing end portions of the cross bar, each receiver having an engagement mechanism facilitating rapid connection and decoupling of the receivers from the cross bar, the receivers also each carrying a wheel support member having an elongated arm and a wheel retainer, and the wheel support members being capable of being swung back and forth in a generally horizontal plane;

one or more ~~powering mechanisms~~ hydraulic cylinders connected to the wheel support members for driving movement of the wheel support members in the generally horizontal plane, wherein the one or more hydraulic cylinders communicate with cylinder rods that are removably attached to the receivers using removable pivot means;

~~whereby~~ the receivers with the wheel support members together comprising ~~comprise~~ a wheel lift apparatus, whereby the wheel lift apparatus may be directly removed from the cross bar and the hydraulic cylinders in the field using the pivot means and the engaging mechanism ~~removably connected to the cross bar using the engaging mechanism, facilitating rapid connection or disassembly of the wheel lift apparatus from the cross bar in a matter of minutes in the field to rapidly permit~~ in-the-field conversion from the wheel lift apparatus to an alternate towing apparatus.

2. (As originally presented) The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein the apparatus comprises a self-loading wheel lift.

3. (As originally presented) The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein the alternate towing apparatus comprises a tow bar.

4. (As originally presented) The apparatus of Claim 3, wherein the tow bar includes frame fork attachments.

5. (As originally presented) The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein the elongated arms may be swung in the horizontal plane from a position inside tires of the towable vehicle to a wheel engaging position.

6. (Previously Amended) The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein the engaging mechanisms comprises a cam lock.

7. (Previously Amended) The apparatus of Claim 6, wherein the cam lock

comprises a rotatable handle and a spring-loaded plunger pin.

8. (CANCELED) ~~The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein the one or more powering mechanisms comprise one or more hydraulic cylinders.~~

9. (CANCELED) ~~The apparatus of Claim 8, wherein the one or more hydraulic cylinders communicate with cylinder rods that are removably attached to the receivers.~~

10. (Once Amended) The apparatus of Claim 1 9, wherein a distal end of each cylinder rod includes an aperture for use in coupling each cylinder rod to a receiver.

11. (CANCELED) ~~The apparatus of Claim 9, wherein each cylinder rod comprises two component rods that are connected to each other and that may rapidly disconnected.~~

12. (Previously canceled and now reinstated and amended) The apparatus of Claim 1 11, wherein ~~each of the one or more cylinder rods may be quickly connected and disconnected from the pivot means~~ comprises attached to the receivers using a removable locking pin.

13. (Previously Amended) The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein each wheel support member is pivotally attached to a receiver using a pivot pin.

14. (Previously Amended) The apparatus of Claim 13, wherein the pivot pin is prevented from being disengaged by a retaining screw.

15. (As originally presented) The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein the attachment of each wheel support member to each receiver comprises two generally parallel plates, one plate lying above the cross bar and one plate lying below the cross bar.

16. (As originally presented) The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein each wheel support member comprises an L-arm.

17. (As originally presented) The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein the boom comprises an extensible and retractable boom, and further comprising a hydraulically powered actuator to move the boom into different angular orientations relative to horizontal.

18. (As originally presented) The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein the end portions of the cross bar are horizontally moveable relative to the rest of the cross bar.

19. (Amended Three Times) A method for using a lifting and towing vehicle, comprising the steps of:

positioning a boom adjacent a towable vehicle, the boom carrying a transverse support beam;

positioning the transverse support beam below a towable vehicle, the support beam having two opposing end portions each supporting removable and slidable ~~connected~~ receivers, each receiver having an engagement mechanism facilitating relatively rapid connection and decoupling of the receiver from the cross bar and carrying a wheel support member, the wheel support members being ~~pivottally connected to the receivers and~~ capable of being swung back and forth in a generally horizontal plane, the receivers and wheel support members comprising a wheel lift apparatus;

wherein one or more powering mechanisms are removably attached to the

receivers using only removable pivot means;

positioning a wheel engaging portion of each wheel support member adjacent and between each of a pair of wheels of the towable vehicle, and then causing the wheel engaging portion to rotate outwardly toward the wheels of the towable vehicle into a wheel engaging position, wherein the one or more powering mechanisms drive movement of the wheel support members in the generally horizontal plane;

lifting and towing the now wheel-engaged and towable vehicle to a desired location; and

disengaging the towable vehicle, and converting the lifting and towing vehicle in the field by relatively rapidly ~~and quickly~~ disassembling the wheel lift apparatus from the support bar in the field using the engaging mechanisms and the removable pivot means ~~in a matter of minutes~~ and replacing the wheel lift apparatus with an alternate towing apparatus.

20. (Once Amended) The method of Claim 19, wherein the one or more powering mechanisms comprise hydraulic cylinders.

21. (Previously Amended) The method of Claim 19, wherein the alternate towing apparatus comprises frame fork holders.

22. (Previously Amended) The method of Claim 19, wherein the step of conversion is accomplished by rapidly removing the receivers from the support bar.

23. (Previously Amended) The method of Claim 20, wherein the hydraulic cylinders

communicate with one or more cylinder rods that are removably attached to the receivers, the cylinder rods being disconnected from the receivers during the conversion step.

24. (As originally presented) The method of Claim 19, wherein the wheel lift apparatus comprises a self-loading wheel lift.

25. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein the hydraulic cylinders ~~powering mechanisms~~ are connected through a plate to the wheel support members, and wherein the plate is capable of being ~~quickly~~ decoupled in the field from the hydraulic cylinders ~~powering mechanisms~~.

26. (Once Amended) The apparatus of Claim 19 25, wherein the wheel support members are each connected to a powering mechanism using a plate.